

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3199

As Reported by House Committee On:
Select Committee on Hood Canal

Title: An act relating to authorizing a geoduck pilot program in the Hood Canal aquatic rehabilitation zone.

Brief Description: Authorizing a geoduck planting pilot program.

Sponsors: Representatives Appleton, B. Sullivan, Eickmeyer and Cody.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Select Committee on Hood Canal: 1/31/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, to conduct a pilot program to test the effectiveness of planting geoducks on state subtidal and intertidal aquatic lands in Hood Canal.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOOD CANAL

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Eickmeyer, Chair; McCoy, Vice Chair; Pearson, Ranking Minority Member; Sump, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Chase and Walsh.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7157).

Background:

Geoducks (*Panopea abrupta*) are large burrowing clams found in quantities sufficient for commercial harvest in Puget Sound, Hood Canal, Admiralty Inlet, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the San Juan Islands.

Commercial harvest of geoduck clams on state-owned aquatic lands is managed jointly by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), and, as a result of a federal court decision, the Puget Sound Treaty Indian tribes. The federal court affirmed the tribes' right to 50 percent of the annual commercial harvest of geoducks and established cooperative shellfish resource management requirements for the state and the tribes. The state and the tribes are responsible for estimating geoduck population size, determining sustainable yield, and minimizing adverse effects to the environment.

The DNR is required to manage geoducks as valuable materials and offers commercial harvest rights to the highest bidder. Half of the revenue supports management of state-owned aquatic lands and resources, and the other half supports the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account for public access and habitat restoration. The DFW is authorized to issue geoduck fishery licenses for commercial harvest.

Hood Canal is a glacier-carved fjord approximately 60 miles in length with approximately 180 miles of shoreline. Portions of Hood Canal have had low-dissolved oxygen concentrations for many years. In 2005, authority was provided to establish aquatic rehabilitation zones (ARZs) for areas whose surrounding marine water bodies pose serious environmental or public health concerns. The first ARZ, known as ARZ One, was created for the watersheds that drain into Hood Canal south of a line projected from Tala Point in Jefferson County to Foulweather Bluff in Kitsap County.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The DNR, in consultation with the DFW, must implement a pilot program to examine intertidal and subtidal geoduck aquaculture within the ARZ One in Hood Canal. The pilot program may occur on appropriate state aquatic lands, including lands managed by the State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission). The program must be designed to determine if geoduck plantings will result in reestablishment of harvestable populations of geoduck in areas affected by low-dissolved oxygen levels. The program shall compare the test sites with other sites within ARZ One in Hood Canal.

The program must test populations and growth rates for at least five years. The DNR must work with school districts, veterans organizations, and other interested groups to actively involve and educate citizens regarding geoducks and the environmental issues in Hood Canal. By December 31, 2011, the DNR shall report the results and recommendations to the appropriate committees of the Legislature.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill clarifies that the pilot program may be on appropriate state subtidal and intertidal lands and expands the pilot to include lands managed by the Commission. The substitute bill directs the DNR to educate and involve school districts, veterans organizations, and other interested groups when implementing the pilot program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 26, 2006.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support) The pilot program can test whether the state can reclaim areas where geoducks have been harvested and are not recovering. The pilot program will work with geoduck harvesters, veterans, and schools to educate and involve the public. By involving citizens in the pilot program, they are encouraged to become better stewards. The DNR will use lessons learned from geoduck aquaculture success in the intertidal area and apply that knowledge to the subtidal area. There will be costs involved to conduct the pilot, including purchasing the geoduck seed. The pilot will be designed to work with other projects in Hood Canal, including the molluscan study. The pilot should be seven to 12 years long to allow enough time to look at more than one reproductive cycle. Another option to consider in the pilot is using mussel rafts to filter the water. Subtidal geoduck aquaculture does work and is working in Canada and Alaska. Reseeding is a tool that Washington should use to preserve and enhance the geoduck industry and improve the ecological health of Hood Canal.

(With concerns) The intent of the bill should be more clear regarding the possible future role of geoduck reseeded. It is not clear what level of enhancement is required in the pilot. There is some question whether the intent is to reseed in areas that have been commercially harvested, or to restore populations in certain areas affected by low-dissolved oxygen. It is not clear if low-dissolved oxygen is causing a decline in geoduck populations.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Appleton, prime sponsor; Fran McNair, Department of Natural Resources; and Sam Swanson, Harvest Divers Union.

(With concerns) Lisa Veneroso, Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.